

Wycombe Go To The Top

By "Chiltern"

Wycombe Wanderers 3,

Maidstone Utd. 0

WYCOMBE WANDERERS went to the top of the Isthmian League on Saturday afternoon after avenging an October defeat at Maidstone. And in doing so they handed out the biggest defeat of the season to the Kent side who had not lost a league game since October 9 last year.

Vengeance is sweet. This fine win in front of 2,500 supporters put the Wanderers at the top of the table for the first time since 1957 when they were champions for the second year in succession.

What a different side Wanderers looked to that day last October when they kicked off favourites and ended up very much second raters.

On Saturday they played a different brand of football. They stuck to their 3, 3, 4, formation which they have fallen into so easily, and showed United the way.

But Maidstone are still a good-looking side. They are superbly fit and play close, man-to-man football. And they play it fast. Apart from a good goal after 10 minutes by Les Merrick, Wycombe were unable to find a way through the Maidstone defence in the first-half.

GOOD GOAL

What a good goal it was. Tony Horseman fed the ball out to the left. Merrick ran it down almost to the by-line before shooting past Jeffrey from an acute angle, when everyone was expecting him to cross the ball.

Eight minutes later Merrick returned the compliment with a perfect cross to Horseman, but the inside-left shot over the bar as the open goal beamed at him.

Paul Bates had a particularly good game, fighting for the ball, shooting hard and running intelligently.

He showed his class in the first half when, anticipating the back-pass he ran between a defender and the goalkeeper, beat both of them to the ball, and hit the post and saw the ball trickle along the goal-line.

This piece of bad luck was rewarded soon after half-time. Bates was upended in the area by Poole, and he made no mistake with the place-kick.

After Horseman had headed against a post, Bates scored the goal of the match. A spectator behind me was heard to say it was worth coming to the match to see that goal and nothing else.

TERRIFIC SHOT

It was. It was the sort of Bates goal we see when he is really in form. Taking a pass from Samuels, he beat a full-back and made as if to centre. Suddenly he changed his mind and from the corner of the penalty area let fly a terrific left-foot shot into the top right-hand corner of the net.

At one stage Maidstone looked as if they were going to spoil the game by using doubtful tactics, and it is to Wycombe's credit that they did not retaliate, and continued to play cool, open football.

Only once was there nearly a bit of trouble. Wigham fell with the ball between his legs, and Baker tried to kick it away from him.

At once a crowd of angry Maidstone players crowded round Baker and there could have been a nasty incident if skipper Bradshaw had not stopped Samuels joining in the fray.

I think referee Vickers was wrong in awarding a free-kick against Baker as he was playing the ball — not the man.

Maskell had a faultless game in Wycombe's goal, and Ian Rundle, apart from a couple of minor mistakes, was a tower of strength at centre-half.

Bates was the best of the Wycombe forwards. Les Merrick began well but faded away, and Samuels had a bit of an off day.

Wycombe.—J. Maskell; D. Bradshaw, J. Beck; B. Baker, I. Rundle, C. Gale; P. Roystone, K. Samuels, P. Bates, T. Horseman, L. Merrick.

Maidstone.—J. Jeffrey; D. Leonard, R. Poole; P. Wigham, A. McGuinness, P. Long; M. Clay, M. Angel, D. Norton, R. Dawe, M. Codling.